

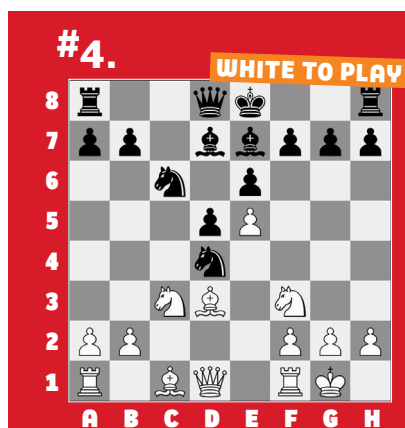
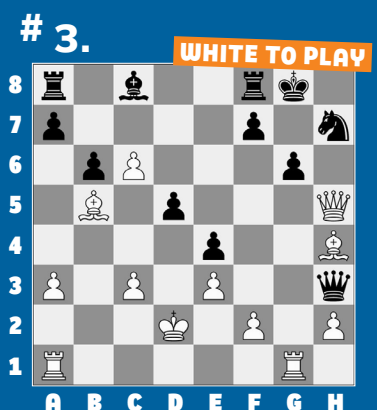
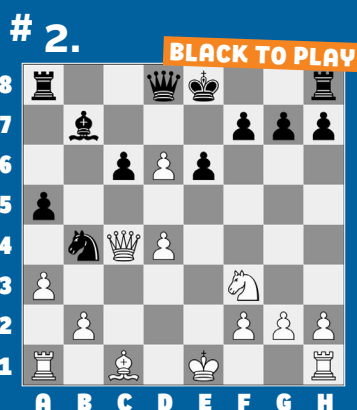
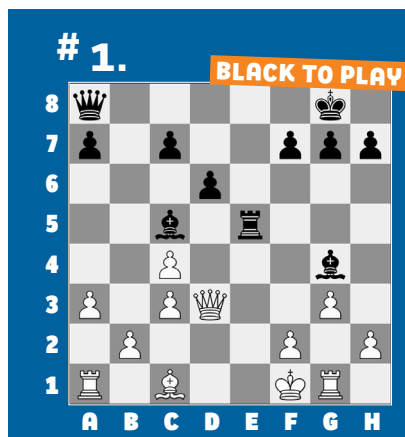
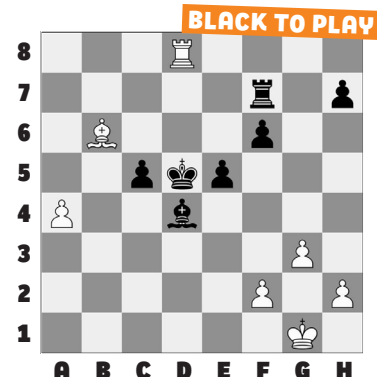
2025 U.S. CHAMPIONSHIPS, PT. 1

Today's puzzles all come from variations that were not played in the ongoing **2025 U.S. Championships**. To follow top-level

chess, it's important to see the traps in the lines they reject. Today gives you practice with this skill. If you can solve these puzzles now, you'll be closer to one day seeing them two, three, or four moves ahead!

But our **example** comes from a very satisfying game variation. Here, GM Wesley So uncorked **39. ... Ke4!** and after **40. Rc8 Kf3!!**, Black's king activity was decisive. White played **41. Bxc5** but **41. ... Rb7!** threatened mate. The game

ended with **42. h3 Rb1+ 43. Kh2 Rc1** winning the piece in Robson – So.



SOLUTIONS

1) 17. ... Bh3+ This is why White didn't try to "win" the Exchange with Bg2xa8! **18. Rg2 Qxg2** mate. (Caruana – Woodward, St. Louis, 2025, analysis) **2) 15. ... Ba6!** This is why 15. a3 was too slow. **16. Qc3 Nd3+!** The white king will never castle, and Black's pieces will dominate. Black is winning. (Sargysan – Krush, St. Louis, 2025, analysis) **3) 23. Rxg6+!!** Okay, this one was played, too. But it's just a

satisfying finish, so I had to include it. **23. ... fxg6 24. Qxg6+ Kh8 25. Rg1** White has too many threats and **Black resigned** in three moves. (Caruana – Oparin, St. Louis, 2025) **4) 11. Nxd4 Nxd4 12. Qg4** This is why 11. Nxd4 was not playable, as now the g7-pawn is falling and, although it's only one pawn, White boasts a decisive advantage since Black's king will be forever stranded in the center. (Sargysan – Atwell, St. Louis, 2025, analysis) **5) 9. Bxe7**

Refuting 8. ... Be7. **9. ... Kxe7** Or 9. ... Ngxe7 10. Nxd6+ also wins. **10. Nc7!** This would be a disastrous outcome of the opening. White threatens Nc3-d5+, forking if Black captures on c7. (Yip – Sargysan, St. Louis, 2025, analysis) **6) 56. Qf2!!** The cherry on top and a stunning resource! A stalemate trick saves White from ... Rf6-f1+, and the queen is in time to deliver a perpetual check. (Krush – Yu, St. Louis, 2025, analysis)